

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and has been prepared to evaluate the potential for the Valle Verde Retirement Community project to result in significant impacts to the environment. This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

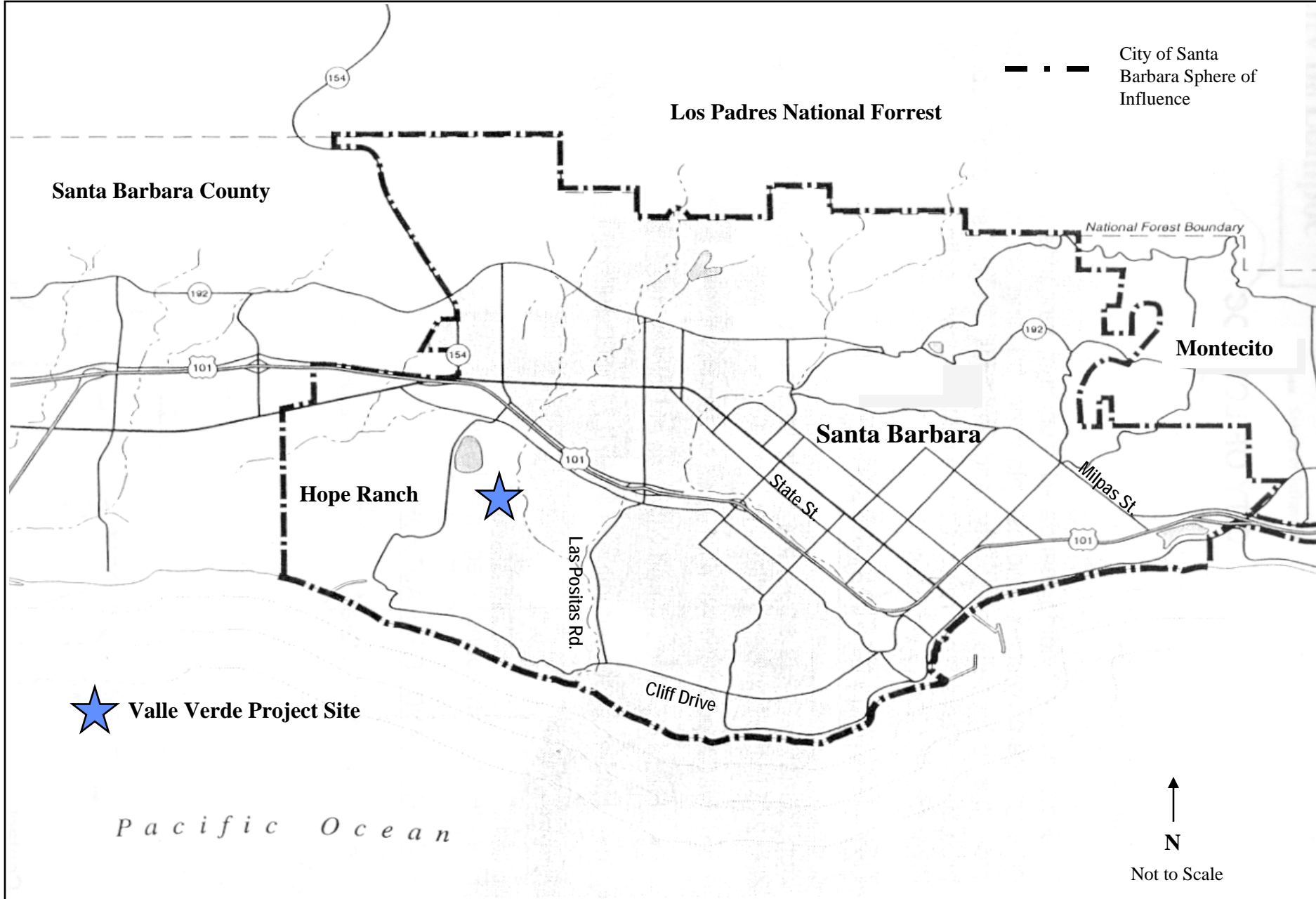
The Valle Verde Retirement Community is located in the Hidden Valley neighborhood in the southwestern portion of the City of Santa Barbara (Figure 1.1-1). The project site is approximately 59.75 acres in size, is comprised of five legal parcels, and is generally bound by residential areas to the south and west; the La Cumbre Country Club to the north; and Hidden Valley Park, Arroyo Burro Creek and residential uses to the east.

Residential facilities provided by Valle Verde include 213 one- and two-bedroom apartments; 11 studio units; a 45-room, 48-bed Assisted Living facility; a 36-room, 80 bed Skilled Nursing facility; and a six-bed Hospice facility. One additional single-family residence is located on the southwestern portion of the campus on what is commonly referred to as the “Rutherford property.” Other resident-serving facilities provided on the Valle Verde campus include an Administration Building, Dining/Multi-Purpose Building, Maintenance Building, Salon/Staff Lounge, Recreation Building; six gazebo structures, and a two-unit/four room bed & breakfast for visitors.

The proposed project would provide 40 new independent living residential units, and also includes the demolition of the single-family residence located on the Rutherford parcel, the demolition of two independent living units (a duplex building), the demolition of four studio units provided in a single structure, the conversion of the six bed Hospice facility to another use, and the conversion of two Bed & Breakfast units to another use. The project would result in a total net increase of 33 units on the project site. Other major project components would result in additions or remodels to the Assisted Living facility, Administration Building, and the Dining/Multi-Purpose Building. The existing Maintenance Building would be demolished and a new maintenance facility would be provided.

Several of the existing parking areas on the project site would be reconfigured and a total of 83 new parking spaces would be provided. After project implementation a total of 414 parking spaces would be provided on the project site.

Other project components include the dedication of a 9.8-acre oak woodland area on the western portion of the project site; a Lot Line Adjustment; and various Zoning Ordinance Modifications to reduce required street and yard setbacks, porch or building eave setbacks, and building separation distance.



The Valle Verde Retirement Community Project requires approval of the following discretionary entitlements.

1. Conditional Use Permit Amendment to allow expansion of the Valle Verde Retirement Community (SBMC § 28.94.030);
2. Modifications to allow less than the required distance between main buildings on the project site (SBMC § 28.15.070);
3. Modifications to allow less than the required front yard setback for some of the proposed residential units and parking spaces (SBMC § 28.15.060);
4. Modifications to allow less than the required interior yard setback for some of the proposed residential units (SBMC § 28.15.060);
5. Lot Line Adjustment to allow adjustment of the property line between two adjoining parcels (SBMC § 27.40 and Government Code § 66412); and

1.2 PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR THIS DOCUMENT

The Valle Verde project requires discretionary approvals by the City. Therefore it is subject to the environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In accordance with section 15121(a) of the *Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act* (CEQA Guidelines), the purpose of an EIR is to serve as an information document that “...will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effects of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project...” This EIR has been prepared as a “Project EIR” pursuant to section 15161 of the CEQA Guidelines. This section states that “...this type of EIR should focus on the changes in the environment that would result from the development. The EIR shall examine all aspects of the project, including planning, construction and operation.”

CEQA Guidelines section 15143 indicates that “*an EIR shall focus on the significant effects on the environment. The significant effects should be discussed with emphasis in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. Effects dismissed in an Initial Study as clearly insignificant and unlikely to occur need not be discussed further in the EIR unless the Lead Agency subsequently receives information inconsistent with the finding in the Initial Study.*”

The CEQA Guidelines also provide guidance regarding the standards of adequacy for an EIR. Section 15151 of the Guidelines states: *An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of environmental effects of a proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts.*

The courts have looked not for perfection but for adequacy, completeness, and good faith effort at full disclosure.”

1.3 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THIS EIR

Impact Evaluation. The Santa Barbara Planning Division prepared an Initial Study (May 21, 2009) for the Valle Verde project (Appendix A), and it was determined that an EIR was required to evaluate the following environmental issue areas:

- Biology
- Transportation and Circulation

A scoping hearing for the project EIR was conducted by the Planning Commission on June 4, 2009. Minutes from the scoping hearing and comments received regarding the EIR Notice of Preparation, which was circulated for public review between May 22 and June 22, 2009, are provided in Appendix B. As a result of the scoping process, an evaluation of the proposed project’s aesthetic impacts was added to the EIR.

The Initial Study prepared for the Valle Verde project also concluded that other environmental impacts of the project would either be less than significant, or could be reduced to a less than significant level by identified mitigation measures. Potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and mitigation measures identified by the Initial Study are summarized in Section 2.0 (Summary) of this EIR, and are described in Section 8.0 (Impacts Found to not be Significant) of this EIR. All proposed mitigation measures for the Valle Verde project are also provided in Appendix A and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan prepared for the project (Appendix C).

In addition to the environmental impact evaluation sections identified by the Initial Study and required by CEQA (i.e., project-specific and cumulative impacts, growth inducing and significant irreversible impacts), this EIR provides an evaluation of the Valle Verde project in relation to sustainable development objectives.

Alternatives Analysis. The Alternatives section of this EIR (Section 9.0) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 15126.6 of the *CEQA Guidelines* and focuses on alternatives capable of eliminating or reducing significant adverse environmental effects associated with the proposed project, while feasibly attaining most of the objectives of the project. Five alternatives to the proposed project are evaluated:

- No Project - No Development
- No Project - Existing Conditional Use Permit Buildout
- Reduced Biological Impacts – Eliminate the Proposed Driveway Connection to Torino Drive

- Reduced Biological Impacts – Relocated Proposed Residential Units on the Project Site
- Reduced Biological Impacts – Reduced Fuel Management Zone Width

1.4 LEAD AGENCY

Approvals by the Planning Commission (discretionary permits and adoption of the environmental document) and the Architectural Board of Review (design review) are required to implement the Valle Verde project. The City of Santa Barbara Community Development Department, Planning Division is the Lead Agency responsible for the completion of this EIR and the environmental review of the proposed project.

1.5 OTHER APPROVALS

The State Water Resources Control Board must issue a Notice of Intent under the State General Construction Permit to authorization storm water discharges from the project site.

A permit from the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District will also be required for the proposed demolition of on-site structures if it is determined that there is asbestos-containing material in the structure(s). The Air Pollution Control District issues permits for building demolition projects that involve the removal of asbestos-containing material.

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT PROCESS

The procedural requirements for the preparation, review and adoption of an EIR are briefly described below.

1. **Notice of Preparation (NOP).** After determining that an EIR is required for a project, the Lead Agency files a Notice of Preparation (NOP) soliciting input on the EIR scope from "Responsible," "Trustee," and any involved federal agencies. The NOP is also distributed to the State Clearinghouse if one or more state agencies is a responsible or trustee agency, and to parties previously requesting notice in writing (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082; Public Resources Code Section 21092.2). The NOP is posted in the County Clerk's office for 30 days. A scoping meeting to solicit public input on the issues to be assessed in the EIR is required under City CEQA Guidelines.
2. **Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).** The DEIR must provide the following information:
 - Table of Contents
 - Summary

- Project Description
 - Environmental Setting
 - Significant Environmental Impacts (direct; indirect; cumulative; growth-inducing; and unavoidable impacts)
 - Mitigation Measures
 - Alternatives to the proposed project
3. **Public Notice and Review.** A Lead Agency prepares a Public Notice of Availability of an EIR. The Notice is placed in the County Clerk's office for a minimum of 30 days (Public Resources Code Section 21092). The Lead Agency sends a copy of its Notice to anyone requesting it (CEQA Guidelines Section 15087). Additionally, public notice of DEIR availability is given through at least one of the following procedures: a) publication in a newspaper of general circulation; b) posting on and off the project site; and c) direct mailing to owners and occupants of contiguous properties. A 45-day public review period has been provided for the Valle Verde project. Written comments on the adequacy of the environmental impact analysis provided by the EIR can be provided to the City. Verbal comments regarding the EIR can also be provided in testimony provided to the Planning Commission.
 4. **Notice of Completion.** A Lead Agency files a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse after it completes a DEIR.
 5. **Final EIR (FEIR).** A FEIR must provide the following information:
 - The DEIR
 - Copies of comments received during the public review of the DEIR
 - A list of persons and entities commenting on the DEIR
 - Responses to comments received on the DEIR
 6. **Certification of FEIR.** The Lead Agency certifies that: a) the FEIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA; b) the FEIR was presented to the decision-making body of the Lead Agency; and c) the decision-making body reviewed and considered the information in the FEIR prior to approving a project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15090).
 7. **Lead Agency Project Decision.** A Lead Agency may: a) disapprove a project because of its significant environmental effects; b) require changes to a project to reduce or avoid significant environmental effects; or c) approve a project despite its significant environmental effects, if the proper findings and statement of overriding considerations are adopted (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15042 and 15043).
 8. **Findings/Statement of Overriding Considerations.** For each significant impact of the project identified in the EIR, the Lead or Responsible agency must find, based on substantial evidence, that either: a) the project has been changed to avoid or

- substantially reduce the magnitude of the impact; b) changes to the project are within another agency's jurisdiction and such changes have or should be adopted; or c) specific economic, social, or other considerations make the mitigation measures or project alternatives infeasible (CEQA Guidelines Section 15091). If an agency approves a project with unavoidable significant environmental effects, it must prepare a written Statement of Overriding Considerations that sets forth the specific social, economic or other reasons supporting the agency's decision that the significant impacts are acceptable in this case due to the overriding benefits of the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15092).
9. **Mitigation Monitoring/Reporting Program.** When an agency makes findings on significant effects identified in the EIR, it must adopt a monitoring or reporting program that verifies the implementation of the mitigation measures that were adopted or made conditions of project approval to mitigate significant effects. A copy of the proposed Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is provided in Appendix C of this EIR.
 10. **Notice of Determination.** A local agency files a Notice of Determination with the County Clerk after deciding to approve a project for which an EIR is prepared (CEQA Guidelines Section 15094). The Notice is posted for 30 days and sent to anyone previously requesting notice. Posting of the Notice starts a 30-day statute of limitations on CEQA legal challenges (Public Resources Code Section 21167[c]).